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SRIMAD VARA VARA MUNAYE NAMAH

MUMUKSHUPPADI

[The Manual for the Seekers of Salvation (MOKSHA)]

Published in Memory of the Six Hundredth Year's Celebrations of SRI MANAVALA MAMUNI

[*SUPPLEMENT TO THE SRI RAMANUJAN*]

(The English adaptation of SARARTHA MALIKA, the quintessence of the unique commentary of that great Glossator, Srimad Vara Vara Muni, graciously contributed by Jagadacharya Simhasanadipathi, Maha Vidwan, **P. B. ANNANGARACHARYA SWAMI** of Kancheepuram).

By

S. SATYAMURTHI AYYANGAR
GWALIOR

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INTRODUCTION

Salutation to Manavala Mahamuni, the repository of Srisailesa's grace, the ocean of knowledge, devotion and other auspicious qualities and the very and personification of love for Ramanuja the Prince among ascetics.

Salutation to the great preceptor, Lokacharya, son of Sri Krishnapada and Saviour of those stung by the venomous serpent of Samsara.

Tossed up, as we are, in the ocean of miseries, torn between the dreadful recurrence of birth and death and passing through innumerable forms, from time to time, we have to know a good many things by way of gaining salvation, the eternal emancipation from bondage. Of these, knowledge of the 'Five Topics' (Artha-Panchakam) is absolutely essential. These vital topics convey :

(1) The nature of the Supreme Lord (Brahman) ;

(2) The nature of the individual soul (Jiva) ;

(3) The means for attaining the Lord ;

(4) The end or the final goal ;

and (5) The impediments between the Jiva and his goal.

As the three secret doctrines, known as '*Thirumantra*', '*Dvaya*' and '*Charama Sloka*' help one to have a clear and concise grasp of these five topics, the ardent aspirant to Moksha will do well to concentrate on these three esoteric texts, the mystery lore (Rahasya Manthras). The genesis of this TRIAD will readily heighten their importance and grandeur.

The 'Thiruvashtakshari' (Eight-syllabled), otherwise known as 'Peria Thirumantram' or 'Moola Mantra' (i.e.) the grand Mantra or the Mantra of prime importance, came to light at Badarikasrama in the Himalayan heights, by way of *Nara's* initiation by the Supreme Lord *Narayana*, the Lord Himself assuming the form of *Nara*, the disciple, as well. *Dvaya*, the Mantra-Ratna or the Gem of Mantras, was imparted by the Lord to Goddess Sree Maha Lakshmi, in Vishnuloka, while the great '*Charama Sloka*'—the secret of secrets, spelling out the path of loving surrender to God, was imparted by Lord Krishna, right from His chariot, on the battle field at Kurukshetra, to Arjuna—the quintessence of the teachings in Bhagavadgita, the Song Celestial. Thus, the origin of all the three secret doctrines is traceable to the Supreme Lord Himself. That is how the Lord heads the list of Vaishnavite preceptors in the apostolical succession, as brought out by

Sri Koorathazhvan's invocatory sloka "Lakshminatha-samarambham..................vande guruparamparaam."*

Although the text of these three secret teachings by the All-merciful Lord is brief, yet their rich and majestic contents had such a fascinating appeal to our illustrious preceptors (Poorvacharyas), well-versed in all the Shastras, that they delved deep into these texts with great avidity and propagated their meanings in great depth. Even so, the Acharyas, who preceded Sri Ramanuja were much-too-fastidious in picking and choosing the worthy recepients, true and trusted, of these closely guarded secrets, with the result that only very few could receive instruction in these and that too, in strict secrecy. It was Ramanuja, who, out of boundless compassion for the masses, gathered them all and proclaimed these precious truths, imparted to him by Goshtipurnar under pledge of secrecy. Ramanuja had to approach Goshtipurnar as many as eighteen times and it was only after a gruelling test of the earnestness of the disciple that the doctrines were at long last taught under a vow of secrecy. When reprimanded by the irate Goshtipurnar for this cheeky transgression, Ramanuja confessed his guilt and invited perdition on himself if only he could save millions—an act of mass reclamation, which would doubtless redound to the credit of Goshtipurnar. Struck dumb by the universal concern of Ramanuja and with a gnawing uneasiness, born of self-introspection, Goshtipurnar cursed his own narrow mind and complimented Ramanuja profusely for his all-embracing love and hailed him as 'Emberumanar' (My great Master). This epoch-making anecdote finds mention in Sri Varavara Muni's 'Upadesa Ratnamalai', where Ramanuja is referred to as 'Varambaruthaar'-one who broke the trammels. Thus, these doctrines came to be preached extensively and elaborately from Ramanuja's days but, during his life-time, none committed them to writing. A commentary of the Rahasya texts, ascribed to Sri Koorathazhvan, has been referred to in a similar commentary compiled later on by Sri Vedanta Desika, but the former is no longer extant. Sri Parasara Bhattar, the illustrious son of Koorathazhvan wrote a commentary on these secret doctrines, in eight Sanskrit slokas, known as 'Ashtasloki'. Compressed in a bare eight slokas is, however, a huge treasure revealing the literary greatness and vast erudition of the author. It was, however, given to that profound scholar believed to be an incarnation of Lord Devaraja of Kancheepuram Himself, Pillai Lokacharya, the illustrious son of an illustrious father, Vadakku Thiruveedi Pillai, to write out as many as eighteen Rahasya texts, exquisite and elaborate, in sweet and scintillating style. Among these, some are in the form of direct annotations of the three Rahasyas or parts thereof and others deal with several other allied topics. After him, Aachhan Pillai wrote a few esoteric texts like 'Paranda Rahasya' etc. Out of the several annotations written by Lokacharya, Mumukshuppadi is easily the best, from several points of view. Whereas the other Rahasya texts suffer from

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* लक्ष्मीनाथ समारम्भाम्............वन्दे गुरुपरंम्पराम् ॥

various handicaps such as being all-too-brief or much-too-elaborate, preponderance of Sanskrit words etc., Mumukshupadi, written last of all, is not only free from all these handicaps but it also contains a lot more, not covered by those texts. It has, therefore, rightly come in for special appreciation and wide and detailed study by Sri Vaishnava scholars, all over. Sri Manavala Mamuni's glorious commentary on these secret texts has been abridged by Jagadacharya simhasanadhipathi, Maha-vidvan P.B. Annangaracharya Swami, in a simple, easy-to-follow style, for the effortless grasp of such an abstruse subject by one and all, an act of Grace galore. An English rendering of this 'Sarartha Malika' has been attempted in the succeeding chapters for the benefit of the yearning public, not conversant with Tamil.

MUMUKSHUPPADI

CHAPTER I

(THIRUMANTRA)

(1) *Knowledge of the three mysteries (Rahasyas) is indispensable to the 'Mumukshu'*, the ardent aspirant to Moksha, that is, salvation by attaining to the Lord's lotus feet.

The seeker of that eternal bliss, seething with supreme disgust of worldly life, and unable to stand any longer on the stinging spike of Samsara, has to inevitably gain the sure and certain knowledge of his goal in relation to his own self and the manner of attaining it. And it is here that the three secrets or mysteries come to his aid.

(2) *Of the three mysteries, that which needs to be known first is the eight-syllabled Thirumantra.*

The priority of Thirumantra stems from the fact that one has to know one-self first, well and truly, before determining one's goal and exploring the means for attaining it. The other two Rahasyas providing a knowledge of the goal and the means, therefore, recede to the back-ground, and Thirumantra is right in the vanguard. 'Thirumantra' distinctly reveals the 'Swaswaroopa' or knowledge of the self, namely, that the Jiva (individual) is subservient to the Paramatma (Supreme Lord) and the latter is at once the Means and the End.

Thirumantra comprises two parts, the *Mantra* and the remainder thereof 'Mantra-Sesha'. *'AUM'*, the Pranava is the Mantra and 'Namo Narayanaya', the Mantra Sesha. The latter elaborates the former. Likewise, 'Dvaya' expands the 'Mantra-Sesha'. and 'Charama Sloka', in turn, elucidates the contents of 'Dvaya' Thus 'Thirumantra' acquires a natural priority over the other two, in a sequence of categorical understanding.

Derived from 'Mantaaram traayathe'*, the Sanskrit word 'Mantra' means that which protects those who ponder over it. Such protection can be afforded either through its sheer power of resonance in the process of uttering it over and over again, known as Japa, or by meditating on its meaning and content. So then, Thirumantra grants the necessary protection to the *Upasakas*, through continual chanting either orally or accompanied by ritualistic offerings and to the *Prapannas*, who see in God a harmonious blending of the Means and the End, through an assimilation of the inner meaning, namely, that the Lord is the ultimate destination as well as the means for reaching it. It is this second aspect of the Mantra that is dwelt upon by Sri Parasara Bhattar in a Sloka of his 'Ashta-Sloki' " Dehaasaktatma-buddhir yadi bhavati padam............"**

The gist of this sloka is :—

He, who is bewildered into mistaking the body for the soul, has to look to the third syllable 'Ma' in the Pranava, signifying the sentient Jiva (Soul). Sentient as he is, he is apart from the insentient matter, that the body is. Again, the soul is likely to be looked upon as its own master, independent of others. The first syllable 'A' of the Pranava, however, dispels such a notion by bringing out the fact that, far from being independent, the Jiva is a vassal of the Lord. Further, a possible misapprehension, that the Jiva could be subordinate to others as well is dispelled by the middle syllable 'U' of the Pranava which indicates that the Jiva is the exclusive possession of the Lord. Even so, a doubt might arise whether this exclusive slave of the Lord has to make any effort to tend himself. The word 'Namah' resolves this doubt by indicating that self-protection is not enjoined on him and that the sole responsibility therefor rests on the Master (Lord God). The word 'Narayanaya' throws into bold relief the fact that the Lord is 'All in one, a combination of all conceivable relations around us, Father, Mother, brother, son, so on and so forth and even more, thus cutting out altogether the remotest chance of earthly contamination by the so-called kinsmen and the involvement in the worldly pleasures. Here then is the unfailing succour for the Prapannas afforded by 'Thirumantra', pregnant with all these meanings.

(3) and (4): ***In keeping with the greatness and grandeur of 'Thirumantra', it has to be nurtured with loving care and reverently chanted frequently, in solitude.***

Apart from this, the efficacy of the Mantra can be ensured only when this

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*मन्तारं त्रायते

**देहासक्तात्मबुद्धिर्यदि भवति पदं साधु विद्यात्तृतीयं
स्वातन्त्र्यान्धो यदि स्यात् प्रथममितरशेषत्वधीश्चेत् द्वितीयम् ।
आत्मत्राणोन्मुखश्चेन्नम इति च पदं बान्धवाभासलोलः
शब्दं नारायणाख्यं विषयचपलधीश्चेत् चतुर्थीं प्रपन्नः ॥

loving devotion is extended beyond the Mantra itself, to the Supreme Lord forming its theme and the gracious preceptor, who taught it.

The manifold greatness of this Mantra will be unfolded in the succeeding pages. Supreme among all Mantras, the most sacred of them all and the mystery of mysteries, Thirumantra embraces all the four Vedas. It would but be commensurate with its greatness if this Mantra were fostered with great fervour and not publicised cheaply in undesirable and unresponsive quarters.

(5) and (6): Forgetting themselves and the Lord, those caught up badly in the mesh of earthly existence failed to render service upto the Lord, legitimately due from them and were not even aware of this serious lapse on their part. Out of sheer compassion for these souls in dire distress, not knowing what they were missing, submerged as they were in the vast ocean of Samsara, the Lord came down assuming the forms of both the Teacher (Narayana) and the pupil (Nara) and initiated the pupil into the great Thirumantra, the quintessence of all knowledge and through him, the vast concourse of humanity, to enable them to gain a true knowledge of themselves and reach the safe haven, namely, the Lord.

The Lord assumed the form of the disciple also in order to demonstrate to the ignorant people of the world how the disciple ought to conduct himself. The sishya (disciple) ought to have faith in the scriptures, be inclined to follow the code of conduct enjoined by them, be orthodox, have devotion for Lord Vishnu, be free from conceit, bear unbounded love for the preceptor and tend him with loving care, looking upon himself and his possessions as existing solely for the benefit of the preceptor.

(7): Knowledge acquired through a study of the various scriptures is like wealth amassed through one's own effort, whereas knowledge derived from 'Thirumantra' is like the ancestral wealth inherited effortlessly, being the one condescendingly imparted by the preceptor.

(8) to (13): The Mantras expatiating on the Lord's attributes and His Avatars (Incarnations), which brought them to the fore, are indeed many. These Mantras fall under two categories, namely, the whole (Vyapaka) and the fractional (Avyapaka), the former treating Godhead in its entirety and the latter dealing with only certain aspects of it. Innumerable are the auspicious traits of the Lord and so also His incarnations. The Mantras are likewise innumerable, some dealing with the Lord's traits and others dealing with His Avatars, some dealing with these fully and others, only in part. And, therefore, the former category of Mantras is superior to those in the latter category. The three cardinal Mantras of the former category are the Eight-syllabled Thirumantra, the twelve-syllabled

Mantra relating to 'Vasudeva' and the six-syllabled mantra pertaining to 'Vishnu'. "*Narayanaya* vidmahe, *Vasudevaya* dheemahi, Tanno *Vishnuh* prachodayat"* is the Vishnu Gayatri. The three vyapaka (whole) Mantras centering round these three names, namely, Narayana, Vasudeva and Vishnu, dealing with the all-pervasive Lord, are got at by prefixing and affixing to these names the common prefixes and suffixes of all Mantras, in general, and will thus be: Aum Namo Narayanaya', 'Aum Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya' and 'Aum Namo Vishnave' respectively.

Even among these three principal Mantras, the eight-syllabled 'Thirumantra' is the best. Among the pantheon of Deities, Narayana is the Supreme and among the Mantras there is none superior to 'Ashtakshari', the 'Thirumantra'. This has been highlighted in Narasimha purana. The fact that Narayana Mantra has been mentioned first in the Vishnu Gayatri, referred to above. is also the pointer. Further, the other two Mantras, namely the Vasudeva and Vishnu Mantras get relegated by reason of (i) their being handled by the unorthodox and the heretics, who deny the Lord's form and attributes and (ii) their not being complete, except in a limited sense. The unorthodox school, while acknowledging the supremacy of the Lord, is not prepared to concede His attributes and predications and thus reduce the supreme to a 'nirvisesha'. formless, colourless, and odourless. While these two mantras (Vasudeva and Vishnu Mantras) bespeak the Lord's immanence neither of these deal with the why and wherefore of it. Where and how the Lord pervades, the nature of the objects pervaded, the quality of the pervader and the specific purpose of such immanence have not been indicated in either of these mantras although the 'Vasudeva Mantra' has a slight edge over the 'Vishnu Mantra' in so far as the manner of pervasion is indicated in it. Here again, the objects in which this pervasive form of the Deity dwells have not been indicated. Thus both these Mantras suffer from serious deficiencies and cannot claim parity with 'Thirumantra'. On the other hand, in Thirumantra, the Ashtakshri, the word 'Naara' treats of the objects pervaded, the Bahuvrihi compound of the word 'Narayana' brings out the Lord as the in-dweller of all things and creatures having a name and form, while the Tatpurusha compound reveals the Lord as sustaining the whole universe. Again, one aspect of the word 'Ayana' spotlights the Lord as the Means while another reveals Him as the End as well. Thus 'Thirumantra' is complete in all respects and meaningful to the brim. For this very reason, this great Mantra, of all the Mantras, came into sharp focus in the upanishads such as 'Narayananuwaka', 'Subalopanishad', 'Mahopanishad', 'Antaryami-Brahmana' etc., and was eagerly sought after by the Rishis, the Azhwars and the Acharyas and propagated through their utterances, hymns or other works and discourses, as the case may be.

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* नारायणाय विद्महे वासुदेवाय धीमहि । तन्नो विष्णुः प्रचोदयात् ॥

(14) to (16): The excellence of 'Thirumantra', which describes the Lord, even surpasses that of its subject-matter, namely, the Lord. This is due to the fact that the Mantra itself delivers the goods and is very much handy for its adherents even if the Lord, whom it consecrates, keeps at a distance. Take the case of Draupadi. She was in dire distress when the attempt was made to forcibly disrobe her in Duryodhana's court and she called out the name of 'Govinda'. Govinda did not turn up and yet the mere utterance of His name was enough and it supplied an endless stream of Saris, which went on multiplying on her personand tired out the dastardly Dussasana. Those who might question the propriety of introducing the name 'Govinda' while discussing the greatness of the name 'Narayana', will do well to realise that the former only serves as a foil to heighten the greatness and grandeur of the latter. If the former, with just a fractional importance as compared to the latter, could do so much, how much more should be the potentiality of the latter? It goes without saying—a self-evident truth.

(17): No matter how the Thirumantra is uttered, with or without the heart in it, or even derisively, it does the job alright. Its inherent nature as a protecting force remains *in tact,* under all circumstances and whoever chants it reaps the benefit vouchsafed by the Mantra, no matter how he goes through it.

(18) to (21): This Mantra confers all the desired benefits as enumerated in the stanza "Kulantharum......"* (Thirumangai Azhvar's Periya Thirumozhi I-1-9). The stanza in question spells out the benefits accruing to those who utter the name 'Narayana', namely, exalted parentage, wealth, razing to the ground the erstwhile edifice of evil and misery, a passage to HEAVEN, a facile atmosphere for worshipping the Lord, the Lord's grace and a host of other benefits.

Those, who seek wealth here on earth, as well as those who aspire for wealth and positions in the upper worlds, will achieve their respective objectives with the help of this Mantra. Likewise, those who court the Kaivalya type of Moksha and those who pine for blissful service unto the Lord in Heaven, reach their respective goals. Through the constant recital, as well as ritualistic offerings made by invoking it, this Mantra serves as the vehicle for securing all the desired objects.

For those who pursue one or the other of the paths of religious discipline and conduct, namely, Karma Yoga, Gnana Yoga and Bhakthi Yoga, and chant

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* குலந்தரும் செல்வம் தந்திடுமடியார் படுதுயராயனவெல்லாம்
நிலந்தரஞ்செய்யும் நீள்விசும்பருளும் அருளொடு பெருநிலமளிக்கும்
வலந்தரும் மற்றும் தந்திடும் பெற்ற தாயினுமாயினசெய்யும்
நலந்தரும் சொல்லை நான்கண்டுகொண்டேன் நாராயணாவென்னும் நாமம்.

this Mantra, it helps to remove all the obstacles in their respective spheres and crown their efforts with success.

This Mantra helps those who seek the path of loving surrender to the Lord's grace and protection (Prapatthi), by affording them the correct perspective, namely, the true relationship between the individual and the Lord and strengthening their conviction through delectable meditation on the five vital meanings within its sweet fold. To this last category of persons, the mere chanting of this Mantra will be a pleasant pastime.

(22) to (24): Contained in this Mantra are all the objects it is incumbent on every one to know. This has been acknowledged by Thirumangai Azhvar in Periya Thirumozhi (VIII–10–3).* These objects are five, namely, the true nature of God, the true nature of the individual soul, the means of attaining the Lord, the nature of the obstacles and the finale. The Vedas and the Vedangas reveal these objects while the whole of Saint Nammazhvar's Thiruvoimozhi treats of these only. Our Poorvacharyas (preceptors) considered themselves as altogether unborn, prior to their acquisition of the knowledge of these and there was no question of their thoughts being diverted away from them, at any time thereafter, rather, they subsisted on these objects. c.f, Thirumalisai Azhwar's Thirucchandha-Viruttam-Stanza 64.** In other words, whatever they studied and discoursed upon, were animated by these five objects, through and through.

(25): Although the prowess of the Mantra itself is great, as pointed heretofore, and consequently, one could stand rooted in it exclusively, yet our preceptors adored the Lord described therein, even more than the Mantra. This was because they saw in the Lord, a harmonious blending of the Means and the End. No doubt, the Mantra by itself helps its adherents in ever so many ways, as enumerated already. Some of its adherents achieve their heart's desires, using this Mantra as the means. There are others whose goal is the Lord all right, but they employ different means such as Karma Yoga, Gnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga, to reach the goal. By invoking the aid of Thirumantra, they reap the benefits of accelerated progress. But, unlike all these individuals, our preceptors took refuge in the Lord and did not employ any other means to attain Him. For them, the Lord was at once the Means and the End and hence, all in all.

(26): This Mantra elucidates (1) the true nature of the souls (2) the appropriate means and (3) the proper goal to be attained by them.

(27): The finale (state of salvation) has been dealt with by the author, *extenso*, in his other Rahasya texts, namely 'Prameyasekhara' and 'Archhiradigathi'.

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* மற்றெல்லாம் பேசிலும் நின் திருவெட்டெழுத்தும் கற்றுநான்

** அன்று நான் பிறந்திலேன் பிறந்தபின் மறந்திலேன்

(28): ***The structure of this Mantra is such that it has eight letters and three words.*** some are inclined to bifurcate the word 'Narayanaya' into 'Nara' and 'ayanaya' and adding to these six letters, the two letters in 'Namah' they hold that here is an eight-lettered mantra even without the inclusion of 'Pranava' (OM). This will not, however, hold water, as it is opposed to the vedic text, *Omityekaksharam*, Nama iti *dve Akshare*, Narayanayeti *Panchaksharani** (1 + 2 + 5 = 8 letters).
(1) (2) (5)

(29) and (30): ***The three words of the Mantra reveal three meanings, namely subservience unto the Lord, dependence on Him and service unto Him.***

(31) to (34): ***The first of these three words is 'Pranava' (Aum), comprising the three letters A, U and Ma.*** Letters *A* and *U* combine to form *O* and this is followed by the letter *M*. No doubt, the vedic text recognises Pranava as a single letter (Omityekaksharam) in its consolidated form (Samhitakara) and yet in its 'Asamhitakara', it is also capable of being split up into three distinct letters, as above, with their respective connotations. As a matter of fact, Pranava is the essence of all the Vedas (Rig, Yajur and Sama Vedas) inasmuch as the three letters, referred to above, have been culled out as the essence of the respective Vedas, like butter obtained by churning curds stored up in three different pitchers.

(35) to (57): Of the three letters, the first letter *A* is from where all sounds originate and it is also the condensed form of the word 'Narayana' which means 'Protector of all'. Thus the letter *A* denotes the Lord Himself, the originator of the whole universe and the protector of all. *A* is the very first of all letters and could thus symbolise the origin of the universe, namely, the Lord. Derived, as it is, from the root '*Ava rakshane*', *A* means protector and here again, it could rightly denote the Lord, who is the protector of all.

The twin aspects of the protection extended by the Lord to His subjects are removal of all undesirable things and fulfilment of aspirations, as applied to individuals. And again, things eschewed and things desired vary from individual to individual, depending upon the state of mind, its equipment and evolution. As a matter of fact, the subjects fall under four distinct categories, namely (1) samsaris or those wallowing in the sty of wordly life, with its terrific involvements (2) the aspirants to Moksha (Mumukshus) (3) Released souls (Muktas), who have reached the heaven and (4) the ever-free, eternal heroes (Nityas), who never passed through the mill of Samsara and thus never tasted wordly life, but continually enjoy the grand privilege of being the Lord's proximate attendants in heaven. This classification will bring into sharp focus the mental make-up of those in the respective categories, their relative aspirations and abhorrence. To the worldlings (Samsaris), there are the pains caused by the mental and physical

* ओमित्येकाक्षरम्, नम इति द्वे अक्षरे, नारायणायेति पञ्चाक्षराणि ।

ailments etc., while they seek the pleasures of food, drinks etc. To those who aspire for Moksha, the impediments are contacts with those in the first category, nay, very existence in their midst and their incessant longing is to reach the High Heavens. To those in the remaining two categories, namely, 'Muktas' and 'Nityas', anything that deflects them from, or interferes with their service unto the Lord is an obstacle, to be removed forthwith, while intensification of such service is what they would desire.

The author has already stated in his work entitled 'Prapanna-paritrana' that there is no protector other than the Lord. It has been pointed out therein threadbare, that the so-called protectors in the conventional world, father unto son, the elder brother for the younger, husband for the wife, the king for his subjects, the lesser deities like Indra, Sun, Varuna and so on, stand no comparison before the Lord, who, by reason of His eternal link with the subjects in all categories, is the unfailing protector of one and all. Episodes from the Puranas and the Ithihasas drive home this fact. That the elder brother cannot be depended upon is seen from the way Vali treated Sugriva and Ravana dealt with Vibhishana. Rudra's treatment of Brahma and Kamsa's handling of Ugrasena show that the son, as a saviour of the father, can be written off. Kaikeyi is an example of the uselessness of the mother and Hiranya of the ruthlessness of the father, while the story of Nala and Damayanthi and the heart-rending episode of the dastardly outrage on Draupadi in the immediate presence of her husbands, discount the husband as the protector of the wife and so on. And then, these earthly relations cut at each other's throats, when it comes to sharing the worldly possessions, throwing to the winds, the so-called bonds of love and duty. The celestials, such as the Sun and the Moon, fare no better, as they themselves had to subserve those powerful despots, Hiranya and Ravana. Brahma, the demi-urge had his own tale of woes. Betraying his helplessness dispossessed of the Vedas, forming his hand-book for creation, by Madhu and Kaitabha, the demons, Brahma bemoaned his lot as, " I have lost my sight, my wealth ", And what a pity, his head was severed by Rudra. None of these can, therefore be looked upon as the Saviour.

When the Lord extends protection to His subjects, the immediate presence of Mahalakshmi, His Divine Consort, is absolutely necessary and, in this context. Her association with the letter A, as a protecting force, has to be thought of. Although the Lord is surely capable of protecting His subjects, all by Himself, yet the Sastras say that He bestows such benevolent protection in the company of His Consort, Sri Mahalakshmi, Who is grace personified :—' Lakshmya saha Hrisheekoso Devya Karunyaroopaya, Rakshakas sarva-sidhante Vedantepi cha geeyate '* etc. This is just to eliminate the possible risk of the Supreme Lord being alienated from His subjects on account of the innumerable lapses of the latter. The

* लक्ष्म्या सह हृषीकेशो देव्या कारुण्यरूपया । रक्षकस्सर्वसिद्धान्ते वेदान्तेऽपि च गीयते ॥

Divine Mother alone, as an infallible intercessor between the erring subjects, on the one hand, and the perfect Lord, on the other, could suitably influence Him and invoke His redemptive grace, which will then automatically operate in favour of the former. Therefore, the letter A has to denote Lord Narayana in close conjunction with Mahalakshmi. Of course, Lakshmi inheres in Lord Narayana and still, this fact has now to be specifically remembered and emphasised. Here we have to recall the unique manner in which this was expressed by that eminent scholar, His Holiness Senapathi Jeeyar, who lived long ago. He said 'If Sri Mahalakshmi departs from His chest, then only will She be apart from this letter', thus emphasising the Divine Mother's intimate connection with both and that the aforesaid two events can never occur. Even as the mother has her link with her husband's bed, attending to her child in the cradle, side by side, Mahalakshmi, the Divine Mother retains her connections with both the first letter A (of Pranava) and the last letter *Ma*, standing respectively for the Lord and the individual soul. Oh, what a homely and telling analogy! When queried where exactly, of the three entities, Easwara (God), Chit (Sentient beings) and Achit (Insentient matter), Lakshmi belongs, there could be a lingering doubt whether she belongs to the first, namely, Easwara. But then, there is but one God and our great preceptors have clearly established that Lakshmi belongs to the second category with this unique distinction, however, of being connected with both the protector (Easwara represented by the letter A and the protected (*Chit* or individual soul), denoted by the letter 'Ma'. Her place is in the last letter *Ma* quantitatively while She also subsists in the first letter A by virture of Her extra-ordinary qualities and the semantic significance of that letter. The analogy of keeping to the bed of the husband besides attending the baby in the cradle, quoted earlier in a general way, could be illustrated by taking the concrete case of Yasoda, her inseparable contacts with Nandagopa, the husband and Krishna, the darling son. It is noteworthy that this juxtaposition has been well brought out in the seventeenth stanza of Sri Andal's 'Thiruppavai', *where the Gopis woke up Nandagopa first, Yasodha, next and last of all Krishna.

If, as elucidated earlier, 'Pranava' merely denotes subservience of the individual souls to the Lord, how could it cover their subservience to the Lord's consort, Maha Lakshmi as well, in the absence of any direct reference to her in this syllable? This poser is again answered by a common-place example. When a servant is engaged by a wealthy person, the accompanying deed stipulates that the former should do all jobs set unto him by the latter. Although the deed does not specifically mention that the servant should carry out the fiats of the mistress of the house as well, yet, in actual practice, it is seen thut he does all the work

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* அம்பரமே......நந்தகோபாலா எழுந்திராய்
........................அசோதாய் அறிவுறாய்,
........................உம்பர் கோமானே உறங்காதெழுந்திராய்.

assigned by the mistress. Likewise, we, the individual souls, are the vassals of Maha Lakshmi, the Lord's consort. The in-separability of the Lord and His consort is thus established. It is like the rays of light and the source from which they emanate, the Sun and his sheen, the flower and its fragrance. C.f. Sita's exposition of her status before Ravana, in Ashoka vana, 'Ananya Raghavenaham *Bhaskarena prabha yatha* $ and Rama's exclamation when Sita vindicated her chastity after going through a fire-bath, as follows:—'Ananya hi maya Sita *Bhaskarena prabha yatha*'.‡ The identical phraseology, underlined in both the utterances, deserves to be noted. And, therefore, this sacred conjunction of Lord Narayana and Maha Lakshmi is our sole refuge. Those who worship the Lord and Lakshmi in this state of union are bound to prosper like Vibhishana, while those who seek to divide them and aspire for them separately shall be doomed to perish like Ravana and Surpanakha.

So far as the letter 'A' is concerned, it should be deemed that the dative case (inflection) has been used first and the case-ending discarded subsequently. To the question, why at all the letter 'A' should have initially been used in the dative case, of all the cases, the answer is that this letter is the epitome of the word 'Narayanaya' which follows and the dative case is explicit in the latter. Grammatically speaking, the dative case is used when one exists for another and the aforesaid syntactic modification signifies dependence on the Lord. Supposing it is asked whether dependence is not in the nature of pain or misery, as noticed in the work-a-day world and such a thing should at all be enjoined, the answer will be that this is not the case, under all circumstances. As a matter of fact, service rendered unto one's beloved is a pleasure. It is too well-known that, in the ecstacy of love, nothing delights the lover more than serving the beloved, in every possible manner and no service is considered too low in this context. As the letter A denotes the Lord as the sole Saviour and the protection in turn, stems from His numerous auspicious qualities, the dependence indicated by the letter also hinges on these qualities and is, therefore, bound to be pleasurable. Even otherwise, shorn of all extraneous considerations, dependence on the Lord is the unique attribute of the individual soul, without which it just ceases to be. The two distinct attributes of the individual soul are blissful intelligence and dependence on the Lord. It cannot, however, be argued that the former can still survive without the latter, as the essential nature of the soul is lost once the idea of independence, which is tantamount to plunder of the soul, creeps in. The attainment of its own intrinsic glory consists in realising its dependence on God, Who alone is independant (Swatantra).

(58) to (65): Turning next to the middle letter *U* of the 'Pranava' it is determinative, having the same meaning as the Sanskrit word 'Eva' (only) as seen from the usage in the Vedic texts.

$ अनन्या राघवेणाहं भास्करेण प्रभा यथा ॥

‡ अनन्या हि मया सीता भास्करेण प्रभा यथा ॥

In the present context it means that the soul is subservient only to the Lord, and none else. It was necessary to establish this beyond doubt, in this manner, as we see around, the house, land, sons, servants and other possessions being shared by more than one individual, giving room for a possible doubt whether the dependence of the individual souls could also be dispersed, in a like manner, between the Lord and others.

Some hold that the letter *U* denotes the dependence of the individual souls on Lakshmi. But more important than this is the meaning already arrived at, namely, dependence on persons other than the Lord is ruled out. The necessity for emphasising this arises from the fact that foisting the dependence of the individual souls, the exclusive possessions of the Lord, on the lesser fry, who are themselves struggling through, would be like casting before a dog the oblation (purodasa or sacrificial cake) intended for the Celestials. Even more than dependence of the individual souls on the Lord, the absence or elimination of their dependence on others is, therefore, important. C.f Thirumazhisai Azhvar's reference, in stanza 68 of 'Nanmukan Tiruvandadi'* to the great consideration shown by Yama and his hordes to those, who do not worship other deities though they might be oblivious of Lord Narayana—an exact reproduction, in Tamil, of the idea conveyed in the Sanskrit sloka of 'Vishnu Puranam'. These persons stand on the same footing as a woman, who does not take to her husband kindly, but is all the same not tainted by other men. There is every hope of her developing, some day, love for her husband and reaping the bliss of wedlock, but she would be courting certain disaster if she had illicit love for any other male. Non-dependence of the individual souls on persons other than the Lord would automatically imply the absence of dependence on one's own self. The letter *U*, stressing the dependence of the individual soul, thus points out that it is neither dependent on itself nor on any one other than the Lord.

(66) to (77): And we pass on to the third letter '*Ma*' in the Pranava. This is the twenty-fifth letter, reckoning from the first consonant '*Ka*' and represents the twenty-fifth fundamental principle, the soul (the twenty four earlier principles relate to the five senses, the sensorial and motor organs, the five elements, etc.). Further, the root-meaning of the letter '*Ma*' is 'knowledge' and it rightly denotes the individual soul, whose characteristic, *inter alia*, is blissful intelligence. Simply because the letter '*Ma*' is in singular number, it should not be construed as referring to a single soul only. Indeed, this is used in a collective sense, and as such, it denotes all the souls taken collectively, the whole tribe, comprising the 'Bound', the 'Released' and 'Ever-free'. Would it not be ridiculous to hold that the placard, 'umbrella sold here', displayed by an umbrella shop, denotes that only one umbrella is kept and sold in the shop? This letter '*Ma*', while denoting the individual soul's dependence on the Lord, also shows the

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* திருவடி தன் நாமம் மறந்தும் புறந்தொழாமாந்தர்.

individual soul as the seat of knowledge and thus different from the body, which lacks the faculty of perception. The distinction between the soul and the body has been elaborated upon, in another Rahasya Text by the same author, known as 'Tattvasekhara' and is, therefore, not dwelt upon here.

The unique attribute of the soul, namely, its dependence on the Lord was stressed first and its intelligence mentioned next, as the soul commands respect and is to be desired only because of its dependence on the Lord. This is similar to the flower being desired for its fragrance and the gem for its brilliance. A soul, not dependent on the Lord, simply deserves to be discarded, being as good as non-existent. C. F. Saint Nammazhvar's Thiruvoimozhi, 4—8—10,* and Sri Alavandar's Stotra Ratna, the sloka $ 'Tava seshatva vibhavaat ....', giving prominence to the concept of the soul's dependence on the Lord and reducing it to a mere nullity, without such dependence. Thus, by 'Pranava' (Aum) is stated the relationship between the individual soul and the Lord. Stanza 8—9—3 † of Thirumangai Azhvar's 'Periya Thirumozhi' reflects clearly the meaning of Pranava. It says "How can I, the vassal of the Lord enshrined at Thirukkannapuram, belong to any one else?" By way of reiteration of the statement made earlier regarding the indispensability of Mahalakshmi's presence at the time of protection of the individual soul, it is now said that the souls look up solely to the *Consort of the lotus-born Maha Lakshmi*, a phraseology occurring in Poigai Azhvar's 'First Thiruvandadi-67', ‡ thereby stressing the exclusive dependence of the individual souls on that highly felicitous combination of the Lord and Lakshmi.

Of the three component letters of 'Pranava', letter *A*, derived from the root 'Ava-Rakshane' denotes the protector of all, while the last letter '*Ma*' denotes the objects protected. The dative case imposed on the letter *A* and the intermediary letter *U* denote respectively, the concomitant responsibility of the Lord for extending protection by reason of His being the Supreme Master and the final state attained by the wards as a result of such protection. By virtue of the Lord's protection, the individual souls admitted into the Lord's fold are entirely at His disposal and this cuts out the possibility of their straying into other hands and thus pin-points their exclusive dependence on, and service unto the Lord—'Ananyarha seshatva'. The remaining words of this eight-lettered Mantra further elucidates the meaning of the first word 'Pranava'. The intermediary letter '*U*' of

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* தடம்புனல சடை முடியன் தனியொரு கூறமர்ந்துறையும்
உடம்புடையான் கவராத உயிரினால் குறைவிலமே.

$ न देहं न प्राणान्...तव शेषत्वविभवात् ।
बहिर्भूतं नाथ क्षणमपि सहे यातु शतधा
विनाशं तत्सत्यं मधुमथन! विज्ञापनमिदम् ॥

† கண்ணபுரமொன்றுடையானுக்கடியேன் ஒருவர்க்குரியேனோ.

‡ ஒண்டாமரையாள் கேள்வனொருவனையே நோக்குமுணர்வு.

pranava is explained in detail by the word 'Namah', while the meaning of the first letter '*A*' is expanded by the word 'Narayana'. The dative case terminal of the word 'Narayana' and, according to some, the word 'Naara', elaborates the meaning of the last letter '*Ma*'. The word 'Namah' supplements the meaning projected by the letter '*U*', namely, elimination of dependence on all but the 'Lord'. As 'self' also falls within the scope of such elimination, the word 'Namah' clarifies this point. Likewise, letter *A*, which denotes the Lord as the protector of all, is amplified by the word 'Narayana', which brings out the qualities of the Protector, the objects protected, the manner of protection, etc. The dative case-ending of the word 'Narayana' elaborates the letter *Ma*, standing for the individual soul, by indicating the manner in which the position of the individual soul as the servant of the Lord gets established. It is also held that syllable 'Naara', showing the individual soul (Nara) as eternal (beyond destruction), unchanging and multiple, expands the meaning of the letter *Ma*. But then, why should not the words following 'Pranava', namely, 'Namah' and 'Narayanaya' elucidate the three letters of Pranava in the order in which they occur, namely, *A*, *U*, *Ma*, instead of in the jumbled order of U, A, Ma? The reason for this kind of treatment is that, for the enjoyment of the Lord denoted by the word 'Narayana', of which letter A is the epitome, eradication of the obstacles for such enjoyment, namely, selfness and selfishness is an essential pre-condition, even as the removal of the honey-bees precedes the enjoyment of the honey in the hive. This purpose is served by the word 'Namah' and hence the letter *U*, as amplified by 'Namah' has been mentioned first.

78—94: The middle word 'Namah' of the Thirumantra consists of two words, *na* and *mah*, 'Mah' means that one belongs to oneself but the preceding letter 'na' means 'not that', so that the word 'namah' brings out that one does not belong to oneself. If the word 'Namah' is a glossary of the letter 'U', as already stated, it should exclude dependence on all others, except the Lord. But how is it now explained merely as 'not belonging to oneself'? As between belonging to others and belonging to one's own self, the latter is the more cruel of the two and it was but proper that elimination of this has been accorded priority. This could be elucidated, as follows. When a person gives up the thought of belonging to himself and feels like belonging to another, he can be easily redeemed by the Lord through the spell cast by His numerous auspicious qualities and made to realise the indissoluble bond between Him and the individual soul. On the other hand, if he looked upon himself as his sole monarch, there is hardly any chance of such a one being reclaimed by the Lord, which would be possible only if the concept of self-suzerainity was given up. The word 'namah' removes the obstacles, of which there are three distinct types, namely. (i) those which obstruct the path of knowledge of the essential nature of the individual soul (*e.g.*) self-ness and selfishness; (ii) those which stand in the way of practising the means for attaining salvation (*e.g.*) not beseeching His grace but pinning all faith on one's own self and resorting to self-protection and (iii) those which hinder the final bliss

in the yonder state (*e.g.*) rendering service unto the Lord in the final state with a tinge of self-enjoyment, without resigning, *in toto*, to His grace and pleasure. The word 'namah' operates to remove all the three types of obstacles by combining with (1) the preceding word in the Thirumantra, as 'Om namah', (2) the succeeding word as 'Narayanaya namah' and (3) itself as 'Namo namah.' c.f. the sloka, Mantra-brahmani madhyamena namassa pumsah ... . * ' in the 'Ashta Sloki' of Sri Parasara Bhattar.

With the removal of the impediments for the true realisation of the nature of the individual soul, a state of mind totally bereft of egoism is attained whereby the self and its so-called possessions are looked upon as but different modes of the Lord Himself. C.f. Thiruvoimozhi II-9-9.-* * Employment of means other than the Lord Himself for attaining Him does constitute an obstacle to reach Him. Removal of this obstacle would result in the state described in Thiruvoimozhi, V-8-8, $ namely, invoking the Lord's grace as the sole saviour, for deliverance from all ills and evils. Also compare Periyazhvar Thirumozhi V-3-3†, where the Azhvar affirms that he shall not knock at any door other than His. The ultimate goal of the individual souls is perennial and unblemished service unto the Lord and, in this context, even a tinge of egoism entering such service will stand out as a blemish. Removal of this blemish, constituting an impediment to the final state of consummation, was prayed for by Sri Andal in the 29th Stanza of Thiruppavai,‡ "Destroy all our desires other than that of serving you." The service, referred to here, is selfless service like that rendered by the moon, the cool southerly breeze, flowers, sandal paste etc., to the respective beneficiaries.

The word namah is considered in two ways—sakhanda and akhanda. In the former way, it is composed of two words Na and Mah. The other one is a single word. While taken thus, as a whole it shows the true nature of the soul, the proper means to be adopted by it and the final goal." This is revealed

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* मन्त्रब्रह्मणि मध्यमेन नमसा पुंसस्स्वरूपं गतिः
गम्यं शिक्षितमीक्षितेन पुरतः पश्चादपि स्थानतः ।
स्वातन्त्र्यं निजरक्षणं समुचिता वृत्तिश्च नान्योचिता
तस्यैवेति हरेर्विविच्य कथितं स्वस्यापि नार्हं ततः ॥

* *யானே நீ என்னுடைமையும் நீயே.

$ களைவாய் துன்பம் களையாதொழிவாய் களைகண் மற்றிலேன்.

† உனக்குப்பணி செய்திருக்குந்தவமுடையேன் இனிப்போயொருவன்
தனக்குப் பணிந்து, கடைத்தலைநிற்கை நின் சாயையழிவு கண்டாய்.

‡ ....உன்றன்னோடு
உற்றோமேயாவோம் உனக்கே நாமாட்செய்வோம்,
மற்றை நம்காமங்கள் மாற்றேலோரெம்பாவாய்.

by stanzas VI-5-1* (*worshipping* the place known as Tholaivillimangalam, where the Lord is enshrined), III-3-6$ (*Resigning* to the grace of the Lord enshrined in Thiruvenkatam), and X-8-7† (The word uttered at the end, that is, at the very acme of the bliss of service unto the Lord, is *worship*) respectively, of Thiruvoimozhi. It will be seen that the word underlined in each is synonymous with 'namah'.

In Periya Thirumozhi, VIII-10-3‡ Thirumangai Azhvar has declared that as a result of learning the eight-syllabled Thirumantra, he became a vassal of the devotees of the Lord enshrined in Thirukkannapuram. Service unto the Lord's devotees as well, the logical culmination of service to the Lord, is thus implied in the word 'namah'. It is held by some that service unto the Lord's devotees is implicit in letter *A* (of pranava) with its discarded dative case-ending, which brings into focus the soul's dependence on the Lord; others say that the middle letter *U* (of Pranava) emphasises the exclusive dependence of the soul on the Lord and the farthest point upto which dependence on the Lord could go, by virtue of His unbounded love for His devotees, would be the individual soul's utter devotion to those devotees as well. As this interpretation is not had directly from the text, as such, but deduced only by implication, it matters not whether this particular meaning goes with the word 'namah' or letter *A* or letter *U*. All the same, our preceptors have thought it most appropriate to link this with the word 'namah' which helps to discard the rags of 'I-ness' and 'My-ness', enveloping and disfiguring the individual soul, and to put things before it in their proper perspective.

Before learning the connotation and meaning of the word 'namah', it might have been thought that, being supreme and independent, the Lord would be a self-centred despot; the non-sentient things (achit) are for the sake of others only, while the individual soul (chit) could, in its inherent state of dependence, be partly dependent on itself and partly on others. But the word 'namah' dispels this notion and brings out that the individual soul should also be taken up by the Lord, in precisely the same way as the non-sentient beings are taken to, by their beneficiaries. In other words, the individual soul should be at the exclusive and unfettered disposal of the Lord, solely for His enjoyment c.f., Thiruvoimozhi II-9-4.** To drive home this point, it has been unequivocally emphasised

* துவளில் மாமணிமாடமோங்கு தொலைவில்லி மங்கலம் தொழுமிவளை.

$ வேங்கடத்துறைவார்க்கு நமவென்னலாம் கடமை.

† அந்திதொழுஞ் சொல்லுப் பெற்றேன்.

‡ ....உற்றது முன்னடியார்க்கடிமை,
மற்றெல்லாம் பேசிலும் நின் திருவெட்டெழுத்தும் கற்று நான்.

** தனக்கேயாக எனைக்கொள்ளுமீதே
எனக்கே கண்ணனை யான்கொள் சிறப்பே.

that the individual soul should not, out of a rigid adherence to its native role as the dependent of the Lord, attempt to maintain, *in tact* that state of relationship and thereby disturb the tempo of the Lord's rapturous enjoyment at the time of their union (in the final state). The Lord, in His unbounded love for the subject, who had long eluded Him, might condescend to an amazing level, and yet the subject should do nothing to mar the Lord's happiness, albeit a case of the tables being turned, such as the Master serving the vassal and the like. With the dawn of this knowledge of self-less dependence on the Lord, in the likeness of inanimate things, the individual soul is deemed to have discharged all the duties enjoined on it and it thus secures the aggregate merit of all virtuous acts besides being absolved of all sins. If, howeoer, such an attitude does not spring up, the individual soul will then be deemed to have committed all kinds of sins and ritualistic exercises indulged by it, such as sacrifices, expiatory ceremonies etc., will be absolutely worthless.

95—104: The word 'Narayana', according to one of two possible constructions (i.e.) as a compound of the '*tatpurusha*' class (Naranam Ayanam—Narayanah) signifies the abode of all 'Naaras' or collections of eternal substances, namely :—

The Lord's qualities of knowledge, bliss, purity, power, strength, wealth, valour, prowess, tender love, condescension etc; the divine body of the Lord, lustrous and youthful; divine ornaments and weapons; The Divine Consorts; the eternally free souls; the parasol and other insi gnia of the Lord's sovereignty; the divine gate-keepers and other retinue; the freed souls; the high heavens; the primordial matter and its various transformations; the souls in bondage; Time; the various worlds and the celestials, humans, animals, birds, plants etc., inhabiting these worlds. Besides the inherently everlasting substances these, which are cyclic (i.e.) last for some time, pass off and then reappear, have also been included in the category of things eternal, for the reason that they are also eternal in the sense that the name and form of their species remain unchanged. 'Ayana' means the support for all these.

Taken as a compound word of the '*bahuvreehi*' class (Naaraah, ayanam yasya sah = Narayanah), the word 'Narayana' would mean one, who has all the above substances as his residence, i.e. one who resides in all these substances. Both the above constructions (the *tatpurusha* and the *bahuvreehi*) have proved, respectively, the Lord's transcendence, (paratva) depicting Him as the universal support of all things and His condescension (sowlabhya) representing Him as pervading all things, animate as well as inanimate, and abiding in them, notwithstanding His supreme stature as the Lord of the whole universe. Again, by virtue of these two constructions, the Lord's *immanence as the internal controller* of all that exist, His being the Means for their attaining Him, as well as the final *goal* for them all, are also established.

The final goal is the attainment of the Lord, Who is at once a combination of all relations, such as Master, Father, Mother, Children and all other kinsfolk: c.f. Thirumangai Azhvar's Periya Thirumozhi 1-1-6.* That is why He continues to bestow His benevolent attention on us, so as to instil in us love for Him even when we mix freely with our earthly relations, unmindful of His all-embracing relationship. The Lord remains hidden inside every one and has been, extending protection to the individual souls, right from the beginning of creation, like unto the fond parents who keep themselves in the back-ground and get their wayward sons, terribly hostile to, and estranged from them, fed at choultries where supper is given free at nights. These refractory sons, shunning the home and the parents, wander here and there and resort to feeding at night choultries where food is supplied free for a specified number of sojourners. Watching their movements unnoticed, the languishing parents supply food to the boys through the agencies of such choultries in a manner that they don't suspect the extraneous, source of such supply. And so, such is the supreme benevolence of 'Narayana,' the Lord, whom the individual soul is due to serve:

105–112: Aya, the dative case-ending of the word 'Narayanaya', reveals the deep urge to render service unto the Lord in every conceivable manner, like that of 'Adi Sesha', the first servant, rather the factotum, who serves the Lord in a number of ways, as umbrella, throne, footwear, bed, etc., etc. But then, having determined already that the word 'namah' totally eschews the involvement of the self, would it be all right to refer to such an urge or prayer for service on the part of the individual? The answer to this is that the word 'namah', in essence, stresses self-less devotion, that is, studious elimination of the strands of selfish interest or desires from the texture of devine service. There is, therefore, no repugnance in the soul's prayer for the creation of the conditions and opportunities conducive to such self-less service. As a matter of fact, this only serves to keep, *in tact*, the essential nature of the individual soul as the vassal of the Lord. Ç. f. Kulasekhara Azhvar's prayer in Perumal Thirumozhi IV-9 to the Lord enshrined in Thiruvenkatam—'Oh Lord, may I lie down as the foot-step of your Sanctum Sanctorum and keep seeing your coral lips.'† Although service, as such, has not been mentioned in this prayer of the Azhvar, it is only from the smile of approbation on the Lord's lips that the Azhvar could see whether the Lord was really pleased with the services rendered by him. And hence, the Azhvar's request, as above, to assume the form of the foot-step and watch the Lord's lips, implies prayer for the right type of service. There is, therefore, nothing extraneous or improper in such a prayer and, as a matter of fact, divine service without a break or blemish should be prayed for. C. f. Thiruvoimozhi III-3-I. $ Speaking about

* எம்பிரானெந்தை யென்னுடைச் சுற்றமெனக்கரசென்னுடைவாணாள்.

† படியாய்க் கிடந்து உன்பவளவாய் காண்பேனே.

$ ஒழிவில் காலமெல்லாமுடனாய் மன்னி,
வழுவிலாவடிமை செய்ய வேண்டும் நாம்.

the basis of uninterrupted divine service, mention is made of the devout, whose incessant longing for service is aided by the total cessation of sleep. Before seeing the Lord, their yearning was so intense that sleep was ruled out altogether, while there is no question of sleep after seeing Him, as seeing and drinking deep of that insatiable nectar, the inexhaustible fountain of bliss, are interminable. C. f. Thiruviruttam,* 97—Could the eyelids of those, whose love for enjoying the sight of the Lord is insatiable, ever get shut? Having strayed away from Him and wasted a whole eternity, those who now enjoy the rapturous sight of the Lord bemoan the loss of such enjoyment in the by-gone days and there is, therefore no question of their slipping back to sleepy segregation, in the days ahead, C. f. Stanza 16 of Poigai Azhvar's First Thiruvandadi. † Further, with the upsurge of God-consciousness and God-love, these devout souls feel that, prior to this state, they had not been born at all, and having now been really born, there is no question of forgetting Him hereafter. C. f. Thiruchanda viruttam—64. ‡ For divine service, there is no limitation of time, place and all that. It could be rendered at all places, at all times, and under all circumstances, as indicated in Thiruvoimozhi III-3-1. $

113—115: The 'Thirumantra', like the auspicious cord tied round the neck of the bride at the time of marriage, has eight threads (sacred letters) twisted into three cords (words). Even as the matrimonial cord stamps the bride out as the exclusive possession of the bride-groom, Thirumantra is the hall-mark of the inalienable relationship between the individual soul and the Lord. The bridal cord consists of sixteen strands twisted into two cords, whereas the Thirumantra has eight threads (letters) rolled into three cords (words). This comparison serves to show that even as the husband vouchsafes protection to his woman while tying the sacred cord around her neck, the Lord assumes the role of the husband and protects the individuals who chant this Mantra. Summing up, the Thirumantra spells out:

"Being the exclusive possession of the Lord, I should effectively cease to belong to myself and I should be blessed to render every kind of service unto Lord Narayana, the supreme Master of all,"

(Thus ends the Chapter on Tirumantra).

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* ....தொல்லைமாலைக் கண்ணாரக் கண்டு
கழிவதோர் காதலுற்றார்க்கும், உண்டோ கண்கள் துஞ்சுதலே.

† பழுதே பல பகலும் போயினவென்று அஞ்சியழுதேன்.

‡ அன்று நான் பிறந்திலேன் பிறந்தபின் மறந்திலேன்.

$ ஒழிவில் காலமெல்லா முடனாய் மன்னி
வழுவிலா வடிமை செய்யவேண்டும் நாம்.

CHAPTER II

DVAYAM

Of the three mysteries, namely, Thirumantra, Dvaya and Charama Sloka, Thirumantra is reputed to be the Mantra Raja or King of Mantras and Dvaya is the Mantra Ratna or Gem of a Mantra. As between these two, our Acharyas leaned more on the latter and they would, in fact, bless their disciples to acquire birth in 'Thirumantra' and get nurtured by 'Dvaya'. True to what has been said in his 'Dinacharya', 'Dvaya' was all the time on the lips of Sri Manavala Mamuni, the last of the luminaries in the grand galaxy of our preceptors and his physical frame reflected a mind aglow with the contemplation of its meaning.

116–117: A true Vaishnava ought to possess the following traits :—

(1) Be rid of all attachments to external (ungodly) objects, root and branch, leaving no scope for their rearing their ugly heads again ;

(2) Seek the Lord, the unqualified and eternal protector of all, as the sole refuge ;

(3) Have absolute faith in the attainment of salvation, unduanted by the enormity of one's sins and deficiencies ;

(4) Be all agog for the speedy attainment of the final goal ;

(5) Eke out the existence here, clinging with great love to the pilgrim centres, dear to the Lord, meditating on the auspicious qualities of the Deity enshrined therein and rendering loving service unto Him, in all manner possible (*i.e.*), by word, deed and thought ;

(6) Be appreciative of the greatness of like-minded Sri Vaishnavas and adore them, greeting their appearance in this land of darkness and nescience with awe and reverence like unto the strange phenomenon of a lotus blossoming in a fuming hearth ;

(7) Be solely devoted to 'Thirumantram' and its glossary, the 'Dvayam' ;

(8) Be wrapt in loving devotion to the preceptor who taught these ;

(9) Remain grateful to (i) the preceptor, for having effected blissful tranformation by imparting these secrets, like unto iron transmuted into gold by the alchemist and (ii) the Lord, for having provided fruitful contact with the preceptor ; and

(10) Be always associated with the highly satvic (*i.e.*), soft and saintly persons, possessing true knowledge, detachment and mental peace, because of their stabilising influence.

It is necessary that such a person should keep pondering over the contents of the three mysteries, which will greatly help to foster and sustain the knowledge and conduct, referred to above.

118—119: With the unique exception of these three mystery lores, which concentrate exclusively on the soul-force within, regardless of the outer form (the body and its appendages of caste and order of existence, such as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Brahmachari, Grihasta, etc.), all the other Sastras deal with the attainment of the highest human values through practices and pursuits involving the medium of the body, the visible outer form. Even among these three esoteric texts, 'Thirumantra', with its special emphasis on the inter-relation between the Lord and the individual souls, enunciates that the attainment of the final goal by the individual soul rests on the due realisation by it of its exclusive dependence on the Lord and the resultant necessity of desisting from self-protection. The 'Charama Sloka', with its accent on the absolute independence of the Lord high-lights the Lord as the sole means for the attainment of the final goal, in utter relegation, rather total elimination of all the other means, including supplication by the individual soul. 'Dvaya', which expatiates on the Lord's dispensation in conjunction with Maha Lakshmi, states that the final goal is attained through Maha Lakshmi. What is actually meant by this, is this: Although the Lord is the ultimate Giver and Deliverer, yet He will act only when Lakshmi plays the recommendatory role, mediating and pleading for the erring souls.

120—121: Competence to invoke 'Dvaya' is acquired through the twin feeling of one's own utter helplessness, and looking upon the Lord as the sole refuge, with no thought of any other benefactor crossing the mind. Without such a frame of mind, it would be futile to invoke the Mantra, which is but a supplication to the Lord, Who is at once the Means and the End. These two traits have been dealt with, *in extenso*, by the author in another Rahasya Treatise of his, entitled 'Prapanna-paritranam'.

122—129: This Mantra comprises two parts, as shown below :—

Sreeman-Narayana-Charanau Saranam Prapadye;

Sreemate Narayanaya Namah.

The first part enjoins that the individual soul should seek refuge at the lotus feet of the Lord through the mediation of Maha Lakshmi, while the second stipulates that service unto Them both, in a state of conjunction should be prayed for.

Although the Sanskrit word 'Sree' connotes several things, here it denotes Maha Lakshmi. The authority for this is the text, 'Sreeriti prathamam nama'

Lakshmyah.'* Derived from the root 'Sreen Sevayam', the word 'Sree' is got at, as 'Sreeyate iti Sreeh',$ according to the 'Karmani' class of construction and 'Srayate iti Sreeh' † under the 'Karthari' class of construction, meaning respectively, 'one who is sought after by all, for their edification, and 'one who seeks service unto the Lord, for her own edification'. In the present context, Maha Lakshmi is referred to, in the first part of the Mantra, as the intercessor. Even as the Lord has a dual aspect, namely, being at once the 'Means' and the 'End' for the individual souls, Maha Lakshmi is the intercessor, pleading before the Lord for the redemption of the individual souls, as well as the final goal of the individual souls, namely, service unto her, in conjunction with the Lord. It is the first aspect of mediation that is relevant now. To the question why her intervention is at all necessary for the individual soul seeking the protection of the supreme Lord, with the full knowledge of their mutual relationship, the answer is: Although the Lord is, by nature, merciful and the individual soul is His exclusive possession, yet He would be provoked to uncontrollable anger and be bent upon punishing the latter for his countless transgressions, like hot currents generated from underneath the cool layers of water. If, however, His anger gets subdued, it is only because of the counteracting influence of His spouse, Maha Lakshmi. As the mother of all the individual souls (Akhila-jagan-Mataram) **, she can't bear the pains suffered by them all. She is, however, in the happy position of pleading effectively for them, before the Lord, Who, out of the profusion of His love for her as His most beloved spouse, will ever be all agog to grant her wish. It is thus crystal-clear that none but the Divine Mother can fill up this role of fruitful mediation. There need hardly be any misgiving regarding her capacity to get the Lord round to her way of thinking, when one sees how, during her incarnation as Sita, she could prevail over even Hanuman, that hard nut, and make him desist from putting through his original plan of torturing the seven hundred and odd female servants of Ravana, who were seen surrounding Sita, teasing and tormenting her during her captivity in Asokavana.

130—135: The suffix 'matup' in the word 'Sreemat' indicates the eternal nature of the conjunction of the Lord and Maha Lakshmi. Conjugal lordship over Maha Lakshmi is as integral and inviolable as the other qualities of the Lord, such as omniscience, bliss, etc., and in fact, the latter cannot subsist without the former. Even apart from this, judging by her own innate qualities, Mahalakshmi would not be aloof from her Lord even for a trice, being greatly concerned all the time over the possibility of the Lord, in the exercise of his unbridled independence, rejecting the supplicant souls, her children, in view of the enormity of their sins. And so, the individual souls, seeking the Lord's protection, need not

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* श्रीरिति प्रथमं नाम लक्ष्म्याः । $ श्रीयते इति श्रीः । † श्रयते इति श्रीः ।

** अखिल जगन्मातरम् ।

worry about their heavy load of sins or dread their forthright rejection by an Independent Lord.

The suffix 'mat' having thus established the perpetual presence of Mahalakshmi by the side of her Lord and thereby prepared the ground for supplication by the individual souls, at all times without any restriction whatsoever, all that is needed is the desire on the part of the latter to submit to the Lord's protection. The indispensability of Maha Lakshmi's presence by the side of the Lord, at the time of supplication by the individual souls, can be easily realised from the episodes in Ramayana. During the Lord's incarnation as Rama, Jayanta, Indra's son came down to Chitrakoot, assuming the form of a crow and pecked at Sita's breast, causing bloody injury, and yet he was let off lightly by Rama, with but the loss of one eye, due to Sita's presence by Rama's side, pleading lustily for the crow's deliverance. On the other hand, Ravana could'nt be saved, in a like manner, although he had not inflicted any such physical injury on Sita, simply because she was not present at Rama's side at that time.

136—143: The meaning of the word 'Narayana' is explained next. Of the several meanings attributable to this word, only those auspicious qualities are referred to here, which become pronounced, once the independence of the Lord gets submerged through the spell cast by Maha Lakshmi's personal magnetism and the persuasive eloquence of her pleadings. The qualities, which thus manifest are :—

(i) *Tender solicitude* (*Vatsalya*) like unto the fondness exhibited by the cow, usually fastidious in its food habits, to the newly-born calf, even to the extent of licking the distasteful organic matter sticking to its tender body. This trait of the Lord helps to disarm the supplicants, afraid of rejection by the Lord, in view of their sins, and keep them at ease while approaching the Lord.

(ii) *Sovereignty* (*Swamitva*) to inspire the necessary confidence in the supplicants that they will be looked after well and all their desires fulfilled by the Lord, as the sovereign Master.

(iii) *Condescension* (*Sowseelya*) to prevent the individual souls seeking the Lord from getting scared away by His sovereignty.

(iv) *Easy accessibility* (*Sowlabhya*) to enable the ardent seeker to come face to face with the Lord and cling to Him.

(v) *Knowledge* (*gnana*) to enable the Lord to comprehend the movements of the supplicant and plan out his future progress.

and (vi) *Power or Energy*: (*Sakti*) to overcome the obstacle in the path of the individual souls and give Himself to them.

Of all these traits, 'Easy accessibility—Sowlabhya' is very important and the 'Arccha' or iconic manifestation of the Lord, which enables the devotees to worship a chosen image of the Lord, is obviously the farthest limit of His easy accessibility. Unlike the other forms of the Lord, such as 'Para', the transcendent form in Heaven, 'Vyuha', the universal form in the milky ocean, 'Vibhava' the incarnate form as Rama, Krishna, etc., and 'antaryami', the pervasive form entering the interior of all beings, Arccha, the idol form of the Lord is visible to the naked eye. All the aforesaid traits could, therefore, be discerned in the Lord enshrined in the Image form at Srirangam—that form of the Lord, holding the divine weapons in hand (indicative of His power), keeping one hand in a posture suggestive of asking the worshippers not to fear (revealing His tender solicitude—Vatsalya), the crown on the head (proclaiming His sovereignty), the sweet smiling face (attracting the worshippers—a gesture of His condescension), the feet pressed firmly on the lotus seat (leaving in no doubt His easy accessibility)—indeed, these constitute our refuge. Again, in that very form, those, who look upon the Lord as the Means for attaining Him, can visualise the weapons and the Crown as the insignia of the Protector, while those who look upon Him as the final goal, the object of enjoyment, will find those very weapons decorative as well, and perceive the very acme of beauty in the smiling face, the hand vouchsafing protection and the feet perched firmly on the lotus seat.

144–148: We now come on to the word 'Charanau', meaning 'two feet', a lovely pair, like unto the attractive juxtaposition of two lotus flowers. The word is in dual number (Dwivachana) and can represent only two feet neither more nor less, unlike the words used in singular number being interpreted to refer to a multitude or collection of things of the same kind (collective noun used in singular number) and words used in plural number, yet indicating a single thing only like the editorial or honourable plural. This word is, therefore, suggestive of the self-sufficiency of the pair of feet (indicated by this word) as the means for attaining the Lord, in precisely the same manner as the word itself, which indicates just a pair and nothing else.

Even if both Maha Lakshmi, the mediatrix and the Lord give up the individual souls seeking protection, this pair of feet, strong and firm, will never let them down. Therefore it is, this Mantra specifically refers to the individual souls clinging to the feet of the Lord. c.f. 'Anatikramaneeyam hi charanagrahanam'.* Apart from this intrinsic greatness of the Lord's feet it behoves the individual souls to seek refuge at the Lord's feet, even as the hungry suckling presses its mouth straight into the mother's milk-laden breast. Reference to the feet is, figuratively, the part put for the whole and the feet will thus denote the entire body (Divyamangala-vigraha) of the Lord, the residence of

* अनतिक्रमणीयं हि चरणग्रहणम् ।

Maha Lakshmi and the abode of countless auspicious qualities, which could correct and embrace even such an inveterate foe and unabashed reviler of the Lord, as Sisupala.

149—153 : The word 'Saranam' is now interpreted. It denotes the unfailing means for (i) attainment of one's desires, such as ascent to the high heavens through the stellar course, perpetual enjoyment of the sight of the Lord, partaking of the nectarine bliss of the rapport with the Lord and rendering, uninterrupted service unto Him and His consort, Maha Lakshmi, and (ii) doing away with all things obnoxious, such as likes and dislikes, stemming from the depths of one's ignorance and the resultant admixture of good and bad actions. That is, the Lord's feet serve as the means for the attainment of the Lord Himself. In other words, the object of the attainment is itself the means therefor —two in one. In the preceeding phrase, 'Sreeman Narayana Charanau', the Lord's conjunction with Lakshmi, His auspicious qualities and His Divine form have been revealed. All the three constitute the essential ingredients in the individual souls' enjoyment in the final state of union with the Lord. And yet, the final object of enjoyment has itself been resorted to by the individual soul, as the means therefor, in view of its utter helplessness (akinchanya) and exclusive dependence on the Lord, even for attaining Him (ananyagatitva). It will be instructive here to note how milk, which is a delicious beverage by itself, is also used as medicine for curing certain ailments. The clause 'Charanau Saranam' marks out the Lord's feet as having the unique distinction of being at once the 'Means' and the 'End', unlike all the other types of 'means', which can only lead to the intended goal but cannot become the goal, themselves.

154—159 : 'Prapadye' means 'I seek refuge'. The result is achieved irrespective of whether this takes the form of a mere utterance (vachikam) or genuflection or salutation with joined palms (kayikam). Here it could, however, refer to contemplation of the mind, as it is said that salvation is attained through knowledge, 'Tatva-gnanat muktih'.* In this context, knowledge means the mental steadfastness prompting the inclination or desire to submit oneself to the Lord's protection. As a matter of fact, the Lord being the 'Means' for the individual souls to attain Him, as elucidated all along, their submission to His protection does not constitute the Means for such protection. There is, therefore, no complusion that submission to His protection should be by word, deed and thought.

'Prapadye' is in the present tense, because the individual soul, caught up in the worldly environments, is likely to go astray and resort to means other than the Lord, under the spell of the inferior gunas (propensities), namely, 'Rajas and 'Tamas'. When the 'Satva' guna (purity) predominates, he is sure to get

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* तत्वज्ञानान्मुक्तिः ।

although in its comprehensive sense, it means the destroyer of all obstacles including those besetting the path of the seeker of salvation, in the earlier stages-vide interpretation of this word given in 'Thirumantra'. The obstacle to service that is overcome by this word is self-enjoyment, (i.e.,) service motivated by the individual soul's own sense of delight and enjoyment, as against service rendered solely for the pleasure of the Lord. Service involving even a tinge of personal egoism on the part of the servant becomes worthless and unavailing. Such a predicament is averted by this word.

The prayer for removal of obstacles to service conveyed by this word covers also the removal of other impediments to service, namely, nescience, giving rise to action and the consequences flowing therefrom, such as, contamination by materialistic things. The emphasis, however, rests on elimination of self-centred service and elevation to the type of service, completely bereft of egoism, prayed for by Sri Andal in the 29th stanza of 'Thiruppavai'—"We will serve you exclusively (catering solely to your pleasure)".*

Even the Lord's charming beauty is an impediment for service, as it steals away the hearts of the devotees, thereby tending to slacken their service. Even as prayer for service is eternal, prayer for eradication of the obstacle to service should also be eternal, for the reason that this obstacle confronts even the inhabitants of Heaven, namely, the 'Released' souls and the 'Ever-free' (Nitya soorees). This has been brought out clearly in Thiruvoimozhi IX-3-4,** through a statement ascribed to the Nitya soorees, that even they in Heaven are trapped into self-enjoyment by the ecstacy of the Lord's personal charms but they get cured of such temporary aberrations by the Lord Himself, who serves as the antidote and puts them back on the right track, namely, self-less service unto the Lord, bereft of the last shred of selfish enjoyment and happiness of their own.

[Thus ends the Chapter on the Dvaya.]

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* உனக்கே நாமாட்செய்வோம்.

** மருந்தே நங்கள்போக மகிழ்ச்சிக்கென்று
பெருந்தேவர் குழாங்கள் பிதற்றும் பிரான்.

CHAPTER III

CHARAMA SLOKA

188: Section II ante, elucidated the meaning of the Rahasya Mantra, known as 'Dvaya'. The first sentence of that Mantra dealt with seeking refuge at the Lord's feet. This is now enjoined by the Lord Himself in the Charama Sloka, the quintessence of the Lord's teachings in Gita. The Sloka reads:

"Sarva-dharman parityajya mâm ekam saranam vraja,

Aham tva sarvapapebhyo mokshayishyami ma suchah"

(Abandoning all dharmas, take refuge in Me alone; I am going to release you from all sins. Do not grieve).

This sloka has, therefore, been adopted by our preceptors as the third Rahasya (secret). The special features of this sloka are that the Lord not only called upon Arjuna (typifying all individual souls) to resort to Him alone, but also clarified the manner in which it should be done, namely, shunning or giving up all the other means. This again crystallises the position that with the Lord as the one and only Means, even this submission to His protection is not to be regarded as the 'Means'. This sloka also pin-points the removal of all obstacles to the attainment of Moksha (salvation) and the total redemption of the subject from all sins and thus constitutes a glossary of 'Dvaya'. It was for learning the meaning of this particular sloka from Sri Goshtipurna, Sri Ramanuja went to Thirukkottiyur as many as eighteen times. Keeping in view the exalted meaning of this Sloka, the essence of all essences, and the paucity of persons, who could grasp and assimilate it and thus qualify for invoking the Lord as the sole Means, Goshtipurna was circumspect enough, not to part with this secret of secrets without properly testing the worthiness of the disciple. Sri Ramanuja was imparted the meaning of this Sloka only under a vow of secrecy and that too after he had gone through an imposed fast for a month.

Why is this called 'Charama Sloka', the 'last verse'? Being that which treats of the final or ultimate means, this is called the final or last Sloka. In the preceding chapters of Bhagawad Gita, Lord Krishna had expatiated on several means like Karma Yoga, Gnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, etc., for the attainment of Moksha (salvation). And yet, the already confounded and grief-stricken Arjuna simply sank down in despair, finding all these not only difficult of accomplishment, but also conflicting with his essential nature. The Lord took note of Arjuna's sad plight and relieved him completely by disclosing to him the ultimate or the final means, as in this Sloka, the quintessential knowledge the Lord had kept in reserve, to be revealed last.

189: This Sloka falls into two halves—the 'Poorvardha' (first half) states what the person, who is qualified to resort to this all-embracing Means (Lord) has to do and the 'Uttarardha' (latter half) deals with what is done by the Lord (Means).

190—193: The person, who is qualified to resort to this 'Means', has to accept the Lord as the 'Means', to the exclusion of all other 'Means'. Giving up all the other means is an injunction, a pre-condition for resorting to the Lord, as the sole Means. Seeing that the Lord is resorted to, out of love, imposition of an injunction to this effect is a welcome stimulant for speedy submission by the supplicant to the Lord's protection.

193—202: The first half of this Sloka comprises six words. 'Sarvadharman', the first of the six words, in the accusative case, means all dharmas. Although the word 'Dharma', in general, refers to all acts or means, employed for achieving the intended results, yet in the special context where the means for attaining Moksha are being discussed, those conferring transient wordly gains are out of place. As regards the means for attaining 'Moksha', a number of them has been laid down in the Vedic (Sruti) and the ancillary (Smriti) texts. That is why this word has been used in plural number. These are :—

(i) *Karma Yoga,* involving independent action by the individual souls c.f. 'Karmanaiva hi samsiddhim', * —Gita.

(ii) *Gnana Yoga,* resulting from Karma Yoga (Sarvam Karmakhilam, Partha ! gnane parisamapyate) $—Gita.

(iii) *Bhakti Yoga,* (Munmana bhava mad-bhaktah), † led up to by Karma and Gnana Yogas (Gita).

(iv) '*Avatara-rahasya-gnana*--Knowledge of the secret of Lord's incarnations (Janma Karma cha Me divyam) ‡ Gita.

(v) *Purushottama Vidya:* Knowing the Lord as Purushottama or the Supreme person. (Etat buddhwa buddhiman syat krita-krityascha Bharata) **—Gita.

(vi) Residence in holy places.

(vii) Incantation of the Lord's sweet names.

(viii) Lighting lamps in temples.

(ix) Offering garlands to the Deities. etc., etc.

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* कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादयः । $ सर्वं कर्माखिलं पार्थ ज्ञाने परिसमाप्यते ।

† मन्मना भव मद्भक्तः । ‡ जन्म कर्म च मे दिव्यम् ।

** एतद्बुद्ध्वा बुद्धिमान् स्यात् कृतकृत्यश्च भारत ।

'Sarva', qualifying 'dharman', refers to the daily rituals which enter into the practice of the means covered by the word 'dharman'. 'Sarva-dharman', therefore, refers to the 'Karma Yoga' and all the other means, cited above, for attaining salvation, and the daily (nitya) and occasional (naimittika) rituals, they entail. Strictly speaking, all these so-called means should be termed 'adharma', being opposed to the essential nature of the individual souls, namely, exclusive dependence on the Lord and yet, these are called 'dharmas', in this Sloka, as they are so conceived by Arjuna, acting under a delusion. Arjuna's delusion actually arose from his mental imbalance, looking upon the fight as 'adharma' although it is a duty (dharma) cast upon him as a Kshatriya.

203—214: Coming to the next word, 'Parityajya' or renunciation (tyaga), the 'tyaga', referred to here, is not the mere giving up of all the other means except the Lord, enumerated earlier, but giving them up with a deep conviction —a conviction born of sincere repentence for the erstwhile folly in regarding as the 'means', those which are really not that, like unto mistaking the shell for silver or taking the wrong road, losing all sense of direction. The prefix 'pari' implies intensity, an intense feeling of shame, like giving up heinous crimes, so as to wipe off all traces of the former inclinations and predilections and effectively prevent their shooting up again. The active past participle in the word 'Parityajya' is indicative of the prior need for discarding all the other means before resorting to the Lord, even as one is required to eat only after having a bath. The necessity for first relinquishing all the other means and then courting the Lord arises from the melancholy truth that until the discardable means are renounced *in toto*, they operate as a positive hindrance to the attainment of the final goal. At this stage, it will be instructive to note that in the first encounter between Rama and Ravana on the battlefield, Ravana was completly done up and unable to continue the fight. And yet, Rama's missiles kept striking; much to Ravana's dismay, and it was only when the latter threw down his bow, thereby revealing his utter destitution, that Rama stopped fighting and bade Ravana to go back to Lanka for a night's rest and recuperation and get back the next day, refreshed and equipped, in case he wished to resume the battle. Rama's grace could have alighted on Ravana even earlier, had the latter not stuck on to the bow, which was not merely unavailing but also proved a positive impediment to Rama's grace. Yet another example is that of Emperor Dasaratha, who succumbed to the illusory dharma (duty) of redeeming a plighted word and lost the golden opportunity of enjoying the sweet company of Rama, the very personification of Eternal Dharma—'Ramo vigrahavan dharmah', 'Krishnam dharmam sanatanam'.*

It is argued by some that because the injunction of 'dharma' operates in two ways, that is, it ordains the commission of certain acts and the ommission

* रामो विग्रहवान् धर्मः, कृष्णं धर्मं सनातनम् ।

of certain others, giving up all dharmas would result in the ommission of the enjoined acts and the commission of the prohibited ones (adharma). This criticism will not, however, pass muster, as there is nothing in the text enjoining the commission of the prohibited acts. If it is still argued that giving up of dharmas would imply adherence to the practice of adharmas, the reply is an emphatic 'No', as the word 'Dharma' signifies something positive, namely, the commission of the enjoined acts to the exclusion of the prohibited acts and the two aspects, intertwined as they are, should not be torn apart. If a doubt still lingers that the prefix 'Sarva' would denote 'dharma' in all its bearings, it has to be finally ruled out by saying that 'adharma' is a misfit in this context. In fact, there is hardly any scope for the entry of prohibited acts (adharma) in this process, seeing that :

(i) the individual soul will not indulge in acts, which are by no means pleasing to the Lord ;

(ii) the Lord will not brook effort of any kind on the part of the individual soul ; and

(iii) The final objective of the individual soul being the Lord's pleasure, the former will not indulge in acts which will militate against it.

215—223 : 'Mam', the third word in the first half of this Sloka means 'Me'—'Me, very keen on protecting one and all, your pliable page, ready to cater to your wishes, your unfailing refuge, who will take your failings in good light and never give you up, even if Maha Lakshmi herself (the usherer and mediatrix, who got you admitted into My fold) tries to separate us by pointing an accusing finger at you, a predicament, of course, as odd and unnatural as the cool water causing blisters.' And again, this 'Me' refers to the incarnate Lord, right in front, as distinguished from His other forms, out of sight (Para, Vyuha and Antaryami, already explained in Chapter II,)

The purpose behind the Lord's incarnation is to resusciate and establish 'dharma' on earth, (Dharma-samsthapanarthaya sambhavami)* and yet, He calls upon Arjuna to give up all dharmas and cling to Him solely. No doubt, it sounds paradoxical, but actually, the Lord has revealed Himself as the real 'Dharma', direct and straight, unlike the other so-called dharmas, which are illusory, indirect and roundabout. The superiority of the 'Means', resorted to (the Lord) over the other 'means', given up, is also established. By way of amplification, it is pointed out that the Lord as the 'Means' is eternal and, therefore, ready at hand, omniscient, omnipotent, free from dangers of any kind, the legitimate goal of the individual soul, attainable without any extra aid. On the other hand, the pursuit of the other means involves the effort of the sentient

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* धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि ।

individual and the 'means' themselves being non-sentient and powerless, they depend upon the Lord for fruition, that is, producing the results sought for.

In the word 'Mam' (me), is reflected the Lord's special attributes—His '*Vatsalya*' or tender love in coming forward to instruct Arjuna, over-looking his transgressions and threatened abandonment of duty, namely, the fight; '*Swamitva*' or sovereignty, by exhibiting His transcendental or universal form on several occasions; '*Sowseelya*', easy mixing-up, as seen from His intimate contacts with Arjuna; '*Sowlabhya*' or easy accessibility in His incarnate form, showing His divine person to one and all. Over and above the simplicity basically inherent in His incarnation, here, the word 'Mam' refers to the Lord as a charioteer holding the whip and the reins, with the hair on an uncrowned bare head, covered by dust from the battlefied, and a pair of legs dangling from the chariot.

224—240: The next word 'Ekam' denotes 'exclusive emphasis'. c.f. the usage, as shown below :—

'Mam*eva* ye prapadyante'*—those who seek refuge in Me *alone*—Gita VII-14.

'Tam*eva* chadyam' $—One should take refuge in that foremost person *alone*—Gita XV-4.

'Tvam*evo*payabhootho me bhava '†—May You *alone* be the 'Means', for me. (Vishvaksena Samhita).

'You have unto me given Your holy feet, *alone* for seeking refuge, as the means for attaining You' ‡—(Thiruvoimozhi V-7-10).

Speaking about exclusive emphasis, so much has been said about emphasis. Well, what is it that is excluded? The exclusion of all the other 'means' has already been dealt with, *in extenso*, and it needs no repetition. Nor is there any scope for mistaking the word 'Mam', as referring to any one other than the Lord, such as the minor deities. What is now excluded is, therefore, the likelihood of regarding the 'refuge-seeking', denoted by the succeeding word, 'Vraja', as the means for attaining the Lord. After all, even the stimulus for submission by the individual soul to His protection has been provided by Him alone. Unto the souls, which lay moribund over a millennium, little better than inanimate things, the Lord not only supplied body and limbs, the vehicles of action, but also roused and whetted their appetite for Him through His incarnations. During these incarnations, He came face to face with them, mixing freely and exhibiting His numerous auspicious traits. Only these special efforts on the part of the Lord have fructified into the submission of the individual souls to His protection and

* मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते $ तमेव चाद्यं शरणं प्रपद्य † त्वमेवोपायभूतो मे भव

‡ ஆறெனக்கு நின் பாதமே சரணாகத் தந்தொழிந்தாய்.

it is, therefore, indubitably clear that the submission denoted by the word 'Vraja' cannot at all be regarded as the 'Means', in this context. If one needs authority to support this interpretation, Nammazhvar says in Thiruvoimozhi: "I lodged Him in my thoughts. Well, even that comes from His sweet grace." $ The individual souls should, therefore, realise that the Lord, who is intent on salving them, works for them all automatically, that is to say, even without this formal submission (refuge-seeking). If it were otherwise, it would only detract from the greatness of the Lord as the direct 'means', compact and complete, not dependent on any other aid. It might then be asked why even this formality of a submission is necessary and why all souls should not be salved by the Lord, all at once, if no individual effort was at all necessary. In fact, it is only to meet such a sweeping criticism that the refuge-seeking becomes necessary on the part of the individual soul, as a sentient being, indicative of a mind, calm and clear, with no misgivings about the Lord's benevolence but full of spontaneous love for the Lord, springing from an awareness of its natural state and, therefore, no longer unresponsive to the Lord's gestures of protection, as in the by-gone days.

In 'Sarva-dharman parityajya', the Lord clarified His position vis-a-vis the other 'means', by calling upon Arjuna to give up all Dharmas and cling to Him, thereby dispelling the notion that He is like the other 'means'. And now, in 'Mam Ekam', He clarifies His position vis-a-vis the refuge-seeking, by quelling the notion that the latter is also a means for attaining Him. Resorting to the Lord as a personal effort of the individual soul, looking upon it as a means for attaining Him, smacks of egotism and, therefore, becomes faulty and sinful. The Lord's loving acceptance of the individual soul alone materialises in the latter's protection. In the pursuit of all other 'means', the effort of the individual is pronounced and absence thereof will be faulty and unproductive. Just the opposite is the case when the Lord is resorted to, as the sole 'Means'; here, the personal effort of the individual becomes faulty, as the Lord as the direct 'means' and the sole protector neither needs nor brooks any external aid. This is abundantly clear from Thiruvoimozhi (IX-1-7) * where Nammazhvar says: 'Put in a nutshell, nothing else is needed, neither toil nor worry'. As regards abstenance from personal effort to attain Him, no other authority is needed except the Lord's own directive in 'Sarva-dharman parityajya'. But then, the soul, as a sentient being, has a sense of grateful remembrance to the Lord as the sole benefactor. This can not, however, be regarded as the means employed for attaining Him. c.f. Nammazhvar's lusty expression of gratitude—

'You redeemed and reconditioned my foul mind:'— **

$ உணர்விலும்பரொருவனை அவனதருளால் உறல் பொருட்டு, என் உணர்வினுள்ளேயிருத்தினேன் அதுவுமவனதின்னருளே.

* சிற்றவேண்டா சிந்திப்பே யமையும்.

** என்னைத் தீமனம் கெடுத்தாய்,

'You endowed me with a facile mind, capable of worshipping You with intense love.' $ etc.

241—243: The next word, 'Saranam', is the equivalent of 'Means'. Although this word could denote the 'Protector', the 'house' and the 'means', yet, in this context, it denotes only the 'means', so as to fit in with the earlier portion, namely, 'Sarva-dharman parityajya'.

244—248: 'Vraja' means 'Consider'. Its root meaning is 'go', but here, it relates to 'thinking', according to the rule 'gatyarthah budhyarthah' † and means 'consider firmly'. Thus, 'Mam ekam Saranam Vraja' means 'Consider (firmly) Me alone as the means.' Although refuge-seeking could be done bodily, by word of mouth and mental contemplation, here, 'consider' refers to the last category with the accent on salvation through knowledge 'Gnanan mokshah.' ‡

Summing up, the following have been stated in the first half of this Sloka:

(1) Things to be discarded (Sarva-dharman);

(2) Manner of discarding them (parityajya);

(3) The means to be courted (Mam);

(4) The unique character of the said means, namely, its not needing any other aid (Ekam);

(5) The Means (Saranam);

and (6) Considering firmly the Lord as the sole Means (Vraja).

249—254: Now we proceed to the second half of the Sloka. The first word 'Aham' means 'I' the all-knowing, all-powerful and attainable Master and He deigns to explain in this part of the Sloka what will be done, on His part. Why should the word 'I' refer only to these three qualities of the Lord, namely, Omniscience, Omnipotence and Lordship, out of several others in the vast array of His attributes? Well, these three qualities have particular relevance to the situation on hand. Omniscience has to be invoked for comprehending the state of the individual soul prior to submission to His protection and the manner in which he is to be handled in the post-submission period; omnipotence helps to accomplish the desires of the protected and remove the obstacles in his path, while Lordship (Seshitva) indicates the bond between the Lord and the individual soul and the inherent obligation of the Lord, which it implies, to redeem the subject and enjoy the fruits of His endeavours. The 'Aham' (I) refers to the real state of supremacy of the Lord while 'Mam' (Me) in the first half of the Sloka pointed to the Charioteer in front of Arjuna. The Lord assumed that subordinate role, out of sheer loving condescension. Lest

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$ மருவித்தொழும் மனமே தந்தாய்.

† गत्यर्थाः बुद्ध्यर्थाः ‡ ज्ञानान्मोक्षः

Arjuna should, however, take this interlocutor as no more than a mere charioteer, judging from the outer form and consequently betray fear and distrust in the dictates of the charioteer to give up all dharmas and cling to him, the Lord points out His real state and asserts His supremacy through 'Aham'. Actually, it was in the exercise of His absolute (uninhibited) freedom (independence) that the Lord occupied the subordinate role as Arjuna's charioteer and it is the farthest limit of condescension to which His independence could take Him.

255—256: 'Tva' (you)—You, who are ignorant of your affairs, and even if you are knowledgable, you lack the strength and capacity to put it into effect and even if you had both these qualities, you are precluded by your essential nature (link with me) from indulging in self-protection and have, therefore, resorted to Me, as the sole Means.

257—262: "Sarva-papebhyah"—'From all those sins which, you fear, are impediments to attaining Me, namely, nescience (avidya), built-in propensities and attachments, the impact of past actions and material contacts (Karma, vasana, ruchi). c.f. Nammazhwar's reference to 'Mistaken notion of the eternal soul as the transient body, wicked conduct and foul body' *—(Thiruviruttam-1).

The prefix 'Sarva' embraces all those sins which persist unconsciously even after seeking refuge at the feet of the Lord, through force of habit (as for example, picking from the ground pieces of grass, twigs, etc., and breaking them into bits with the fingers, scratching the body to relieve itching, etc.), resorting to daily (nitya) and occasional (naimittika) rituals either out of fear of being scorned by the world for not doing them, or out of compassion for others lest they should also give them up and come to grief, or reverting to the means already discarded, swayed by the inferior gunas of 'Rajas' and 'Tamas' and the resultant delusion. Pursuit of the discarded means, not as the means for attaining the Lord but out of fear of public criticism, etc., as stated above, will still be sinful, even as a lunatic walking aimlessly along a road gains entry into the village on the route. Likewise, even 'prapatti', that is, submission to the Lord's protection, which needs to be made only once and brooks no repetition, if repeated either in a state of mental perplexity or deliberately, as a means for securing one's ends is tantamount to a sin.

263—268: 'Mokshayishyami' means 'I will get you released from all sins.' By using the verb in the causative form, the Lord meant to say:

(1) I need not make any effort to get you released;

(2) Nor do you have to make any prayer, as such;

(3) Seeing that you have sought refuge in Me, all sins will, in sheer fright, clear out, of their own accord.

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* பொய்ந்நின்ற ஞானமும் பொல்லாவொழுக்கு மழுக்குடம்பும்.

This is the special significance of 'Tva sarvapapebhyo mokshayishyami', as distinguished from 'Aham te sarvapapani nihanishyami'.

The idea underlying the statement that the sins will all clear of their own accord, is as follows :—

There is no such separate entity as sin; it is not something, which engulfs one, like the castor plant shooting from the garbage or the snake stinging. Sins are nothing more than punishment imposed by the Lord and so they will automatically vanish when His redemptive grace descends on the individual. The redeemed soul will never remember them afterwards, and even if he does so, sometimes, he will dismiss it as an unpleasant dream and no more. Continuing this interesting dialogue, the Lord is understood to tell the subject:

"Hitherto you were oblivious of the fact that you are just My body and were, therefore, straying away from Me under the erroneous impression that you were your own. Now that you have realised your essential nature and sought refuge in Me, I shall no longer leave it to you to make any effort to eradicate your sins. You are My body and your nescience (avidya) is the dirt on it. Will I not wash the dirt off My body?"

269—289: 'Ma suchah', the last phrase in the second half of the sloka, dispels Arjuna's grief, by telling him, "Now that you have ceased to tend yourself, after a due realisation of your essential nature, you don't have to worry at all, as you did before, when you were looking after your affairs yourself. Further, I have taken charge of you and your protection is, therefore My job, thereby leaving no room whatsoever for you to grieve."

'Aham, the first word in this half of the sloka, reveals the Lord's omniscience, omnipotence, etc., the very qualities needed to overcome all sins and obstacles in Arjuna's path; the succeeding phrase, 'tva sarvapapebhyo mokshayishyami' indicates the automatic retreat of the sins with no chance whatsoever of their re-entry, and the last phrase 'Ma suchah' clarifies that Arjuna has, therefore, no cause to grieve. The Lord's address to Arjuna is reminiscent of Thirumazhisai Azhwar's address to his mind. c.f. Thirucchanda viruttam-115 "You stupid mind! Why do you at all plunge yourself into an ocean of grief, when the great Redeemer, the Eternal Father and Mother, has entered the soul to vouchsafe the necessary protection from this dreadful cycle of birth and rebirth?" * The Lord exhorts Arjuna by saying, "As the first step, I pardoned your sins and now, in the exercise of my special quality of 'Vatsalya', (tender

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* அத்தனாகியன்னையாகி ஆளுமெம்பிரானுமாய்,
ஒத்தொவ்வாத பல்பிறப்பொழித்து நம்மையாட் கொள்வான்,
முத்தனார் முகுந்தனார் புகுந்து நம்முள்மேவினார்,
எத்தினாலிடர்கடல்கிடத்தி யேழைநெஞ்சமே.

love and solicitude) I look upon those very sins as virtues. Such being my attitude towards you, could you still remain grief-stricken ?"

It is, of course, pretty difficult for one to acquire a taste for 'prapatti', the loving surrender to Lord's grace, as the sole Means of protection. At this stage, it would be worthwhile to recall how one Uyyakkondar, a contemporary of Sri Ramanuja, reacted to the meaning of this sloka, as taught by Ramanuja. Uyyakkondar admired the meaning of 'prapatti', elaborated upon, as above, but nevertheless preferred to persevere in 'Bhakti Yoga', which he was already pursuing and admitted his lack of interest in 'prapatti'. Sri Ramanuja regretfully observed, "Being a scholar, you could appreciate the meaning all right, but you haven't got the taste for 'prapatti', because the Lord's grace has not, as yet, descended on you."

This sloka ordains the giving up of all dharmas, contrary to the dictates of the Sastras, which enjoin the pursuit of those dharmas. The emphasis is thus shifted from everything else to the Lord's absolute independence, which enables Him to redeem the individual soul, all by Himself, unaided by any other 'means'. As a matter of fact, Arjuna had already a firm conviction that Sri Krishna was his sole refuge—a conviction born of his own personal experience of Sri Krishna's superhuman feats, the utterances of the great sages extolling Sri Krishna's glory, and above all, Sri Krishna's helping hand at every turn, an unmistakable indication of Sri Krishna's perfect identity with him. The erudite Vangeepura Nambi, therefore, rightly observed that this Sloka said nothing new, so far as Arjuna was concerned, and this actually belonged to the category of repetition. Several other things, said earlier by Sri Krishna, were only intended to test the mettle of Arjuna and see whether he would be taken in by the other 'Means', elaborated upon in the preceding chapters. Likewise, the aim of the Vedas, in expatiating on the other 'means', is also to instill a knowledge of the essential nature of the individual souls by ridding them of egoism and selfishness. Verily, the Sastraic injunctions are like unto the punitive log tied round the neck of the naughty cow, straying away, to tame it down. But then, it might be asked whether giving up those 'means', which stimulate the true knowledge of one's essential nature, would not be sinful. No, it is not so, even as there is nothing wrong in a sannyasin giving up the dharmas, practised by him in the earlier stages (Asramas) of his life, as Brahmachari, grihasta and vanaprasta. Giving up of all the other 'means' by one, whose knowledge has evolved to such an extent as to look upon the Lord as the sole 'means' will not amount to transgression. As a matter of fact, those dharmas are not given up altogether by such a person. Henceforth, the daily and occasional rituals (Karmas), appropriate to their castes (varnas) and stages of life (asramas), will all be put through by him, not as means for attaining moksha, but as loving service unto the Lord. Comprehension of the Lord's trascendental glory (gnana or knowledge) shall serve to illumine his own essential nature. Bhakti (devotion to the Lord), practised heretofore as a means for attaining the

Lord, will now be practised, not as a means, but as an intense longing for the object of attainment, which is a pre-requisite, even as hunger is, for relishing food. Prapatti, the loving surrender to the Lord, leads to the acquisition of a correct perspective of the true or essential nature of the individual soul, namely, absolute and exclusive dependence on the Lord and complete self-abnegation.

When two different methods, one difficult (Bhakti) and the other easy (prapatti), are taught for the attainment of a common goal, namely, the Lord, we can conclude that what really matters is neither of these, but the Lord's redemptive grace. If at all anything is needed on the part of the individual for attaining the Lord, it is just refraining from obstructing the influx of His grace (protective benevolence) and remaining in a state of passive quiescence. If one asks what harm is there if the individual had also certain merit (sukrita) to his credit, the answer is furnished by (1) Sri Krishna's command (Sarva-dharman parityajya) to resort to Him after giving up even 'Punya', the credit accruing from the performance of meritorious acts, and (2) Sri Rama's offer to grant asylum even to terrible sinners c.f. 'Yadi va Ravanas Swayam' *—message to Sugreeva to fetch Vibishana from his anchorage in mid-air to Rama's camp, even if it turned out to be Ravana, that heinous offender, come in disguise.

There is no middle course between (1) fully imbibing the meaning of this Sloka and *flourishing* (prospering), looking to the great glory of the Lord, and (2) *perishing*, due to lack of faith in this teaching, deterred by the apparent incongruity between the Sastras, on the one hand, and the directive contained in this Sloka, on the other. This is what Sri Embar is stated to have said to his disciple, Sri Parasara Bhattar. "If a person who hasn't got adequate strength of conviction in the 'Sarva-dharma-tyaga' (discarding all dharmas) and 'Siddhopaya-sweekara' (resorting to the Lord, the direct and ready means, to the exclusion of all other means), preached in this sloka, dabbles in it, it is fraught with evil consequences like food consumed in a state of indigestion. Well, on the other hand, he who is really qualified will conform to the spirit of this sloka and act accordingly. c.f. what Sri Andal says in Nacchiyar Thirumozhi (XI, 11) about her revered father, Sri Vishnu Chitta—" Vishnuchitta has heard the dictates of the Lord enshrined in holy Arangam, in His incarnate from as Sri Krishna, right from His chariot on the battlefied, namely, 'Mam ekam saranam vraja', and stands committed thereto." $

Two stanzas, one from Nammazhvar's Thiruvoimozhi (VII-5-10) and the other from Thirumazhisai Azhvar's Thirucchanda viruttam (115), deserve to be

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* यदि वा रावणस्स्वयम् ।

$ செம்மையுடைய திருவரங்கர்தாம் பணித்த
மெய்ம்மைப்பெருவார்த்தை விட்டுசித்தர் கேட்டிருப்பர்,

revolved in one's mind constantly, by way of recapitulating the contents of this Sloka. The gist of these slokas is reproduced below in verse form :

" Will those who appreciate the wholesome message
Of ' Charama Sloka ' and, with clarity of mind, ponder
What unto them the Lord has done, the long list of favours,
Ridding them of the cloak of birth, pestilence, old age,
And death, rooting out ' Kaivalya Moksha ', the great disaster
Of getting lost in self-enjoyment, granting asylum secure
At His very feet, serve aught but the bewitching Lord ? "

Thiruvoimozhi VII-5-10 *

" My stupid mind ! Why do you unto a sea of grief plunge,
When Mukunda the Ever-free, my sovereign Lord has taken a plunge
Into me and of me become a part, my Father and Mother, He will rid
Me from the dreadful cycle of births, vast and varied ?

Thirucchanda virutham-115 $



* வார்த்தையறிபவர் மாயவற்காளன்றி யாவரோ,
போர்த்த பிறப்பொடு நோயொடு மூப்பொடு இறப்பவை
பேர்த்து, பெருந்துன்பம்வேரற நீக்கி தன் தாளின் கீழ்ச்
சேர்த்து, அவன் செய்யும் சேமத்தை யெண்ணித் தெளிவுற்றே.

$ *See footnote on page 38.*